

REMARKS

This application is a continuation of application number 09/397,828, filed on September 17, 1999, U.S. Patent No. 6,641,781, (hereinafter "the parent application"). Claims 1-3 have been cancelled, without prejudice or disclaimer, claims 1 and 2 having been allowed in the parent application.

Claims 4 and 6 provide that a fixed connection block in the rack is connected to passages of an endoscope accommodated in the rack such that no portion of the endoscope is within the connection block.

In contrast, in Biermaier, U.S. Patent No. 5,288,467, in what the Examiner conceives to be the connection block (Fig. 3, 20', 56, and 40') (see Office Action in the parent application, dated February 26, 2002, page 4, paragraph 4) are holes in pressure chamber 15' adopted to receive head 45' of an endoscope (column 5, line 68 to column 6, line 12, Figs. 2-4, Biermaier).

New independent claims 9 and 11 include the feature of passages of an endoscope being connected to a fixed connection block by flexible tubes. This feature of claims 9 and 11 is supported by page 4, lines 22-26, of the specification. New claims 10, 12, and 13 reproduce claims 5, 7, and 8, except for the dependence of claims 10, 12, and 13 on one of claims 9 and 11.

Neither Parker et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,425,815, nor Biermaier disclose, teach, or suggest flexible tubes connecting passages of the endoscope to a fixed connection block. In particular, Biermaier teaches away from such a feature. The holes 20', 56, and 40 in pressure chamber 15' are not connected in any way, by flexible tubes or otherwise, to passages in the endoscope head 45, (see Fig. 4). Instead pressurized liquid or air flows

from a feedback line 2 into pressure chamber 15' and from there into inlets into interior channels in the endoscope head, (column 6, lines 17-25).

CLOSING

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that independent claims 4, 6, 9, and 11 are in condition for allowance, as well as those claims dependent therefrom. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited.

Please enter this Preliminary Amendment prior to calculation of the filing fee, so that Applicant is not charged for pendency of independent claim 1 prior to entry of this Preliminary Amendment.

However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper, not fully covered by an enclosed check, may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael I. Markowitz", written over a horizontal line.

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